

Factors Contributing to the Social Withdrawal among Elderly Women: A Study with Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centers in Kottayam District

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Abstract— Social withdrawal is avoiding people and activities you would usually enjoy. For some people it can lead to isolation, where you may even want to avoid contact with family and friends and just be by yourself most of the time. This study focused on elderly women who are living in the psychosocial rehabilitation centers. This qualitative study found out that, physical, psychological and social factors contributing to the social withdrawal among elderly women.

Keywords— Social Withdrawal, Elderly Women.

I. INTRODUCTION

The old age is a vital part of human life. It is the evening of life. It is unwelcome and problem-ridden phase of human life. An old man is full of experiences and even though experiences are of immense help to the younger generation but now a days he or she is taken as an unwanted burden. Elder's became wise due to the experience from their long lives. In many cultures view older people with respect and kindness and depend upon them to pass down knowledge to the younger generation. According to the WHO, most of the countries have selected an arbitrary chronological age of 60 or 65 as a definition of 'elder person' (WHO 2007), (GK, 2013).

Status of ageing women merits special consideration due to several reasons. Gender is a crucial factor that influences quality of life at any stage of life and particularly more so in the post reproductive years in women. There is a feminization of ageing with more and more women surviving into old age. But the main effect of such extension of life is an extended period of widowhood for women. It is unimaginable for our society to think of the several needs of a widow unlike that of a widower. Widowhood markedly lowers the already low status of a woman in society. There is feminization of formal and informal care and women normatively give care at the cost of their own physical and mental health. Quality of life measured in terms of capacity to maintain physical, mental and social wellbeing decreases with age. Health problems of women are progressive and have impact on mobility and independent living (Khaje, 2014).

Social withdrawal is a type of anxiety. People develop social withdrawal due to their anxiety symptoms and some others develop anxiety because their social situations. The term social withdrawal also associated with social isolation and loneliness. Loneliness and social isolation are considered to be the problems of older person. As individual age, outlive relatives and friends may reduce their interaction with them. The increased chronic illness and mobility difficulties can convert them to stay closer to home. Social networks play vital

role in an individual's life. If the social networks are dissatisfying individual, then the result of this situation will be feeling lonely. Low number of social contacts or social interaction can convert to social isolation and dissatisfaction in life. Sometimes social isolation can lead to aloneness and solitude. But most of the time aloneness and solitude occurs irrespective of choice. Older women face lot of problem due to their isolation and loneliness situation. Older women are vulnerable to high levels of loneliness. It happens due to their greater longevity compared to men. As women age them often outlive spouses, friends and family members who previously provided the social and emotional support that are important for health and well-being. Today the moving generation, the youth tends to treat the elderly indifferently and they have no space in our society. In this study the researcher focuses on social withdrawal in particular person's isolation and loneliness and also its physical, psychological, and social factors that may accompany aging (Devi, 2013). As women age them often outlive spouses, friends and family members who previously provided the social and emotional support that are important for health and well-being.

The present study analyses the factors that contribute to the social withdrawal among elderly women with special reference to Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Center, in Kottayam. The study is fully concentrated on elderly women in Psycho social rehabilitation centers. The researcher mainly wanted to analyze the present conditions and situations of elderly women in the agencies, and mainly focus on their social isolation and the factors which contribute to their social withdrawal. In this study factors includes their physical health, psychological health, and social health. It is also conducting to check their social health and their adjustment with the present environment.

General Objective

- To explore the contributing factors of social withdrawal among elderly women

Specific Objectives

- To explore the physical factors contributing to social withdrawal of elderly women
- To explore the psychological factors contributing to social withdrawal of elderly women
- To explore the social factors contributing to social withdrawal of elderly women

II. METHOD

For the completion of this qualitative research study and data collection, researcher used pre-prepared semi structured interview schedule. Personal interviews were conducted in order to explain the contributing factors of social withdrawal among elderly women. Four personal interviews were conducted to obtain the data. The respondents come under the age category of 60 and above. The first respondent is Bharathi aged 60. Second respondent is Thankam who is 63 years old. Third respondent is Rose and she is 63 years. And the fourth respondent is Mercy and she is 61 years old (Names changed for the purpose of confidentiality). All respondents were residing at psychosocial rehabilitation centers. For this study researcher used some research questions and used a pre-prepared in-depth interview schedule. In this study the contributing factors includes the physical factors of social withdrawal, psychological factors of social withdrawal, and the social factors of social withdrawal.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result and discussion of the study is explained below. This section consists of four sections. They are physical, psychological, and social factors. The identified social withdrawal factors are explained below from the in-depth study.

Physical Factors

Physical factors are one of the major contributing factors that may leads to social withdrawal among elderly. In this study the researcher considered the physical health as one of the major component to study about the social withdrawal. It consist the respondent's eyesight, hearing, illness/weakness and all, these factors mostly influence their social withdrawal. From the discussion with the respondents, the researcher identified that the eye sight is one of the important factor which leads to social withdrawal. The first respondent Ms. Bharathi showed some kind of mental disappointment because of lack of vision. She has the difficulty while seeing the red and black cloths. Because of this lack of vision she usually faces the mobility problems. She needs an external support for walking and all. It restricts her mobility and free movement within the center. Because of this she doesn't have much communication with other residents and most of the time she spend time with the bed. The fourth respondent also faces the problem of lack of vision. She has the difficulty for reading. The vision problem is one of the major problems of elderly. But through the study the researcher found that it affects their social life and also leads to social withdrawal. The second important factor in physical health is about their hearing ability. All respondents were much confident about their

hearing. From this interview researcher found that the hearing ability mostly help them to socialize with others. They can communicate well within the center, and it improves their social health. The third factor includes in the physical health is about their illness/weakness. The illness/weakness is a common feature in elderly population. It may affect their mobility, confidence, communication, psychological health and all. The respondents agree that they have some health problems and illness. Because of this illness they are not mentally satisfied. It may affect their socialization process. 3 of the respondents feel sad about their health. So the illness/weakness is an important factor for social withdrawal among elderly. It restricts their mobility and communication within the centre. So because of this they become self-centered and inferior and also lead to social withdrawal. From this, researcher could conclude that physical factors like difficulty in vision, hearing and diseases are major factors of social withdrawal.

Psychological Health

In this study another factor contributing for social withdrawal is considered as the psychological health. In this study the researcher considered the factors in psychological health like, feeling powerlessness, inferiority, depression, isolation, and powerlessness. Powerlessness refers to the lack of ability to perform their own individual tasks as well as in the social situations. Among the four respondents, powerlessness can be seen in the first respondent. She left a sense of discomfort in performing tasks. She has the problem of shivering. Because of this she shows lack of confidence and powerlessness. She can't do the day to day activities properly because of this problem. From this discussion researcher found that the powerlessness leads to social withdrawal and lack of mobility and all. Another most important psychological health indicator is considered as the depression. Depression is one of the major phenomena mostly we can see in elderly population especially in old age homes. . Extreme sadness, lack of enjoyment in life, loss of weight, insomnia, fatigue and loss of memory are the common symptoms of depression. From the interaction researcher found that some respondents have the problem of depression. From the interview with the first respondent researcher found that, most of the time her thoughts were drawn in about her family, especially about her son. So the respondent shows some symptoms of depressive mind, she shows some discomfort while she talking about her age and all. So this depressive mind also leads her to social withdrawal. The depression is seen in the respondents because most of the time they are thinking about their past family life. Gloominess is shadowed on the faces of the respondents and they tried to pretend to be like happy. So the respondent feels social withdrawal because of this kind of family struggles and depression. Isolation is another phenomena mostly faced by the elderly population, it also come under the psychological health. Peoples at the elder age wishes to spend time and to be with their family, children and grandchildren. But most of them are not able to enjoy the desired life. They feel the empty nest syndrome. They are been detached by the family due to certain reasons. From the

interview with the residents, researcher found that some of the respondents were mentally feels the isolation, but they are adjusted with the present environment. One respondent clearly shows the symptoms of social withdrawal. Actually she was withdrawing from the situations by herself. She doesn't like too much interactions and relations. She wants to be alone and she spends most of the time with her bed. From this discussion researcher found that because of isolation they felt loneliness and moody and lack of communication and all.

Social Factors

The research study also consist certain social factors includes Widowhood, Segregation, childlessness, In-law conflicts, Attitude of the Society towards elderly, Neglect from family Members and Social isolation of the elderly women. Two respondents were widows and rests of the respondents were unmarried. The study shows that widowhood is one of the major factor which leads to social isolation and loneliness in life. The major social problems faced by the respondents are about in-law conflicts. Two of the respondents were deeply shared their sad feelings about their in law conflicts. From the discussion researcher found that it really hurts their lives and family atmosphere. Most of the respondents were facing the problem of neglect from family members. Two respondents don't have any information about their family members for the last 5-10 years. Because the relatives never try to visit these mothers at least for one time and never try to make a phone call for them. Because of these kind of issues the elderly women feeling loneliness at the center, and they feel social withdrawal. So the social factors are mostly affecting the life of elderly women and lead them to social withdrawal.

Social Participation

Social participation is closely related with their social health. In this research study social participation may include the respondent's interaction with other residents, their communication level and attitude towards other residents (cooperative or non-cooperative), and their involvement in public activities. From the discussion with the respondents researcher found that the social participation level of the elderly women is not much active. The second respondent shows high level of active social participation in the center. She always engaged into certain things and takes care of other residents and considers their needs and provides help for them. The interaction and communication level of the respondent is very high. So the respondent never shows any kind of social withdrawal in the center. Other respondents have a passive approach towards the social participation. They don't give much importance to the social health factors. They are engaged with their own personal activities and mostly their communication within the center is limited. But all are very cooperative and have friendly atmosphere within the center.

Suggestions

- Authorities should provide pension and ensure the regularity of its payment to those who are eligible for it

- The residents must be availed with geriatric counseling and adequate psychological support
- Elderly clubs should be introduced in each ward in order to increase the social interaction opportunities of the elderly
- Seminars and sessions should be conducted in order to create awareness among the community and its members
- Organize family meetings on yearly or half yearly basis in order to improve the social health of the elderly people
- To engage the elderly people in different activities such as farming, gardening etc. to make them recover from social withdrawal

IV. CONCLUSION

Increased longevity, health facilities, falling birth rates and other contributing factors have increased the size and share of the aged in the population. All the developed and developing countries are witnessing this phenomenon of the increased proportion of the graying people to its population. This is very much visible in India, particularly in Kerala, where demographic transition has resulted in ageing of population, at a faster rate. The ageing procedure is a biological reality which has its own dynamic, largely, beyond human control. By conducting this study the researcher found that the elderly population faces the problem of social withdrawal on the basis of their physical health, psychological health, and social factors. The challenges of aging are more dealt with older women. Compared with men, elderly women are three times more likely to be widowed or living alone, spend more years and a larger percentage of their lifetime disabled, and are nearly twice as likely to inhabit in a nursing home. The present study reveals that physical factors are one of the major contributing factors that lead to social withdrawal among elderly. Eyesight is common feature in elderly population. It may cause for social withdrawal, psychological health indicators are common in elderly population. Respondents feel powerlessness, depression, and isolation in many situations at the center. Respondents facing powerlessness and depression because of their past family life an experience Psychological factors leads them into lack of communication and lack of mobility at the center. Being the land of elderly, Kerala can popularize the concept of community or assisted living for healthy ageing. Such community centers will bring together the elderly in a single establishment with all sorts of care and assistance-physical, social, psychological, spiritual and emotional-needed in old age. Interaction with peer group will result in the development of a holistic approach to healthy or active ageing.

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